# Dark Shadows

The night was stormy as I fled the scene. In my attempt to flee the threat, I tossed several bins in their path to deter them. I couldn't see who chased after me in the rain. But I saw their dark outlines jagged against the misty alleyways... As I ran across a shining puddle on the pavement that was in my way, a statement repeated itself, "Don't ever look behind you, Paloma..." To my shock, my route led directly to a dead-end, the brick wall still taunted me. I was trapped! Backed up against a wet wall, I could only watch as black snakes silently swarmed me, they appeared to be an army of ravaging shadows...

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*September 1st: I don't recall what happened since my exams, it seems that all my friends have been talking behind my back lately, calling me names... I can still hear their taunts as they say how pathetic I am.*

As I passed the lockers in the school hallway, I overheard a conversation. Sam, Monique and Holly were all loudly laughing. *What were they laughing at?* I was hidden behind the metal of a blue locker, it resembled an iron coffin. I couldn't believe what they were talking about- I was flattered at first, until I heard their whole conversation.

"Paloma Anderson is pathetic if you ask me," remarked Holly as she chewed a stick of gum that Sam had handed her.
"I know, isn't she rather, like, geeky?" Monique eye-rolled, "I mean she's even the head of the astronomy club." They continued to titter as I popped out from behind the locker suddenly to surprise them. The clique changed their tone immediately, sounding sickly-sweet as I waved.

"Hello Paloma," they greeted, "Isn't that a lovely set of folders?" I nodded timidly.

"We were thinking of going to the park today," Holly announced by grabbing my hand suddenly, "Would you like to join us, Paloma?" I responded by indicating no. "Too bad, we're going there anyway- it's your call now," Holly said dismissively as she dropped the fake tone entirely. They quickly departed, leaving me behind in the empty hallway...

As I wandered the hallway, I saw someone throw a stone at a glass window as I passed it… Startled, I glanced outside to see someone staring straight at me. Red hair, freckles and solid green eyes, along with a t-shirt ruffled under a green jacket greeted my sight.

The handsome stranger indicated for me to come outside, and I did so while I approached the tree. Suddenly he appeared from behind a nearby tree, out of nowhere. "Where did you come from?" I asked him curiously, he shrugged before he replied coolly, "Name's Rhys. Where I originated from is none of your business." I smiled back shyly...

*September 3rd: I met this really cool guy, Rhys says exactly what's on his mind and I kinda like that*

*attitude... He's rather snobby, and he speaks about how society is mainstream and naive. Rhys often compares people to ants on a pavement. I wouldn't normally agree, but I'm starting to see his point... He may talk rather upper-class, but I'm personally starting to believe he's a genius.*

The next day, Rhys and I skipped stones together at the park, which was a fine activity for a casual conversation.

"So Paloma," Rhys began talking casually, "Why do people listen to nuisances?"

Rhys picked up a smooth pebble from the ground and then very casually, tossed it at a nearby window when we passed a glasshouse stationed nearby. No comment... While I couldn't stop picking at a piece of fluff on my sleeve, I decided to add my commentary, "Do they?" He laughed.

"People are so insignificant compared to the universe, one of these days you'll see it in a different light." Rhys remarked, before explaining his own theories some more.

"Nuisances are those who defy their destiny via conforming to society's own whims. You don't want to be a vapid sheep, do you Paloma?" I shook my head meekly as Rhys rolled his eyes, "Riff-raff."

The next day it was cloudy and the concrete of the school grounds was drabber than usual... A chain-link fence blocked off the rest of the school as the students milled around the enclosed area. Busy chatter was overheard, which masked the meagre attempts of a substitute teacher to control the crowd. As I walked to my class, I encountered my friends who were waiting next to the fence.

"We need to do something," Holly stated while she stared at me with a cloying expression, "Even if it means being drastic." I stepped back from Holly in wonder, "What are you talking about?" I said with a dry tone, as Sam cornered me from behind. I didn't notice her straight away and inched away from them.

"We're very concerned," Monique's words echoed hollowly, "About how you've been avoiding our company for the last couple of weeks. What on Earth have you been up to these last few days?"

I responded. "I've met someone and we've been spending time together while dating,"

They stared back, "Oh! We had no idea, that's great! We thought you were up to something, that's all. What's he like?" I shuffled my feet as I explained about the wonderful guy I'd just met…

*September 12th: Today I saw something strange. I tossed a jacket onto the bed and something dark flickered there. It was like a dark flame, what was it? By the time I looked back, it was gone as if there was nothing there. I heard a scuttling noise and I investigated it, but by the time I drew back the covers that sound faded away. I'm not sleeping tonight. So creepy....*

I couldn't stop thinking about that dark flicker, and wondered if I should tell Rhys about it when I met him at the shops later that day. I decided against it. We were lined up at the supermarket that

day to purchase a variety of junk-food, and as we passed the cash-register, I saw Rhys pocket extra coins from somewhere.

“There, it’s going to a good cause,” Rhys stated. I looked at him in horror, and it was about then that I started to question what he was doing. Rhys gave me that same snobby expression from earlier, “Alright, I nabbed extra coins from the register, but as I said, it’s going to a... charity.”

I moved his hand quickly to the cash-register to drop the silver coins, but I blacked-out at that very moment… When I came to again, Rhys was standing next to a fountain nearby, tossing the rest of the coins into the water, where they would never be found...

“Where am I? What happened, Rhys?!” I said, “Did you return the donation coins back to the shop? What happened?!”

Rhys paused at my reaction and then chuckled, “What do you think, dear Paloma?” Rhys asked cynically. It was then that I saw the spray-can in his hand, “So let’s paint the town red for today...”

I glanced at him, “If you’re doing this, it will be okay for me, right?” Rhys smiled.

“Why not?” Rhys responded, “We’re both bored with little else to do on a lazy Sunday.”

So letting Rhys lead me down-town, I also picked up a spray-can and began doodling a red squiggle on a nearby wall. It looked quite artistic!

Rhys gave me a thumbs-up, “That artwork is quite exemplary,” he praised. I kept at it, until my artwork had filled the whole wall. Some would call it graffiti, but I didn’t care at that moment… Rhys moved to add his own touch to what I had created, and as he moved a book fell out of his opened bag.

I picked it up, it was Rhys’s diary. “Does this belong to you?” He nodded. I gazed at the pages leisurely; it was filled with nothing but random eldritch words almost like something from out of Lovecraft’s lore. I flicked through until Rhys snatched it away. He was scowling.

*That’s weird, it’s not like I even read it...* It still didn’t feel right; it was if he was hiding an evil secret from me. I glanced back at him. “So, care to share what was in there lover boy?” I said jokingly. “A secret of yours?”

The only reply was a dark scowl as Rhys mumbled a harsh “Back off,” before quickly departing. Rhys left me staring at the red mural that was still lathered on the wall. For a moment, it looked like the letter H. I was puzzled at the significance of the letter as I shook my head slowly at this, “I’ll ponder this mystery some other time.”

The crimson paint still dripped when I left it, it reminded me of fresh blood... I shuddered briefly.

It was almost impossible to concentrate on what the teacher was saying, I couldn’t stop thinking

about my wonderful time with Rhys. After my class ended, I waited at the usual spot for Rhys, but for some reason he took longer than usual: *Why?*

Walking across the lawn, I spotted Rhys with an item that seemed out of place. I paused, I don't recall seeing him with that particular object earlier.

"Rhys? Does that penknife belong to you?" I spoke up when he continued to stay silent and avoided my gaze... At long last, he spoke up, twirling the sharp object around expertly.

"I was walking by earlier and came across this penknife, so I could not resist taking it. Maybe the original owner will come by and collect it from me, who knows." Rhys shrugged languidly.

I wanted to believe Rhy's innocence, but something was telling me there was something suspicious about that knife.

*October 20th: I have not seen Holly all week. Where is she? Did something happen to her? My visions keep getting worse as time passes. I feel like I wake up to something wet and sticky dousing me on the shoulder every morning. When I try to see or touch it, there is nothing there. Except then I can hear a chilling laughter from out of nowhere... The longer this keeps happening, the more I feel like I'm being trapped in a place of utter desolation...*

The school was closed that day. There were several missing posters placed around the empty corridors enquiring for Holly's whereabouts. A distant siren was frequently heard while the frantic mutters of shocked students echoed around the hall. There was a small search-party now consisting of me, Monique and Sam…

Rhys declined the offer when I asked him, although I was extremely suspicious of his refusal to take part in this. Monique looked scared and really shaken as Sam said that we should split up and head for the woods. I decided that Rhys was hiding something at the school and instead headed for his locker. Once I opened the locker, my stomach turned as I spotted a bloodied penknife. I dared not touch it, I knew the horrific act that knife had committed.

There was Rhys' diary. Countless letters spilled out of it. I picked one up and began to read it:

*Dearest Holly, I always thought you were nasty and shallow-minded. Did it occur to you that you are a nuisance to society? Such negligence should be paid for with retribution. You shall all pay for this breach of misconduct!*

I dropped it in a hurry. My mind spun with possibilities of this revelation. Did Rhys and Holly know each other?

I stormed up to Rhys when I spotted him near the alleyway where we did the awesome mural; my sweating hands were already shaking with tension. I approached him as he kicked a spray-can aside. *I knew he'd be here…* My heart was pounding as I called out.

“Rhys!” I yelled out as he looked in my direction, “I know what you did. You can’t hide from me.” Rhys snarled as I continued scrambling for words, “Where did you hide Holly’s body?!”

*This* got his attention, so I asked him a final question: “How did you even know Holly?!” His only reply was a haunting laugh as Rhys now shook his head casually… His disjointed laughter filled the whole place. “Oh, my dear stupid Paloma. You really didn’t even know yet?!”

His green eyes flashed wickedly as Rhys stares directly at me, “You don’t even know what’s going on! Did you even realise exactly *whose* locker you found my letters?” The vision was so quick...

In a blink of an eye, I saw a vision of *myself* scrawling down those letters as Rhys looked calmly upon me. “Isn’t it strange how no-one ever met me in public?” he continued savagely as I stood there agape... He snickered at me.

“The truth is I am just a fragment of your own insecurities.” Rhys proclaimed with a mocking bow.

I could not take it anymore, I could not believe it! I ran back to my home. But to my horror, there were police already parked on the driveway... As a last resort, I literally ran to my best friend’s house where I hoped she would surely let me in.

“Sam! I’m innocent,” I pounded on the locked door as I continued hearing the siren. Sam widened her eyes at this and dialled a number. Drat, I had to run for it again. With no other options left, I headed back straight to where I confronted Rhys. I looked up at the now black sky. The storm was starting...

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I was still running when I reached a dead end. I had no other options. Then as I was backed up against the wet concrete, the police shone a bright torchlight in my face. As they inspected the murder scene, they all shouted, “You are under arrest for the murder of Holly Ferguson,”

I looked closely at the reddened mural as the police began to inspect the wall with some wonder… I blinked and took an even closer look at the layer of thick paint lathered on the wall. *Was this stuff what I thought it was?* What I *thought* was red spray-paint was actually... Holly’s blood.

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